

## Origin of the Feud between the Dog and the Cat

by: Floyd Bibbs

Once upon a time, a long time ago  
In a neighborly community, it happened so  
Why dogs and cats are bitter enemies  
Still till this day, and have among them plenty  
Desire to fight without a reasonable word to say,  
And never again to pass the time in fun and play.

It was in this community known as Pleasant Grove  
That there stood many sparse houses along the branching roads,  
Wet and boggy when rain fell from the clouds  
And dry and dusty when Phoebus shown proud.  
This was before the days of asphalt and machinery used...  
And barbershops were a main source of news.  
With all lofty respect to nostalgia's healthy realm  
This was a simpler and more patient institution:  
Rustic living was in dominion nigh full and whole  
And husbandry was the predominant occupation as supposed.

There on a good farm that stood between two hills  
Lived an aging farmer who was witness to many years,  
Who owned an orchard of trees of fruit  
That he had cared for since mere shoots.  
Thus grown—which stocked his shelves well  
This farmer and fruit grower of whom I tell  
Had an excess of fruit, and that much more

Of which he sold a portion to the keeper of a distant store,  
Who came each year or sent a representative,  
And this yearly coming was not intuitive  
For a business liaison between them was long ago introduced:  
To buy and sell of this stately produce  
All of which this farmer's wife did not allocate to family  
and friends,  
This partnership between these two god-fearing men.  
And this farmer enjoyed an intimacy with life, as any would  
have to confess  
No matter of problem long perplexed him or gave him unrest.

Now this farmer, this grower of fruit  
Had many animals on his farm to boot:  
There lived on his farm a cow, famed Gertrude  
That gave milk without the thriftiness of interlude,  
Whether by good fortune or by desire—  
To give milk in large quantities and never go dry.  
He also had chickens, many hens that scrounged and pecked  
And a quota of roosters that stood among them, grand and erect;  
And ducks and geese that lifted their voices like a choir  
And a dozen hogs whose want of food was not dour—  
That in the mud there enjoyed a gala jubilee  
Two plow horses and three others that could kick and whinny.  
There were sheep there, those saintly beings.

And this noble farmer's dog, Sir Duke; it was with seeing

That nowhere to be found in the entire country  
Was there another quite as majestic as he:  
High he stepped when he trotted—worthy to be enshrined  
Such that no ground creeping plant would hinder nor bind....  
He had a coat—healthy, sprightly and clean  
And bright piercing eyes with a gem's gleam,  
That glared as though he meant to rend  
Each man and animal—every bone, body and limb;  
He had ears that stood good—high and erect  
As if there were always some tinged sound, suspect.  
He was as alert as vigilant Argus there on the yard.  
If I am not to skimp, he had a Cerberus' heart.  
He had a superior cerebration, well capable of design  
And finely muscled was he, each one well defined:  
Legs, shoulders, flank that made him look to be the  
very pet of Hercules  
And a fierce looking snout, had he, that could suppress  
all intrigue;  
Powerful jaws like a barterer's trap and rapier teeth therein,  
And a gristly growl complemented him as the keeper of the  
guillotine.  
He had a howl and bark as the alpenhorn very notes  
That lent his ferocious air and appearance great support;  
But in actuality—had a gentle temperament  
And except in hunting, would never incite harm

be there a choice adjacent.

This Dog went visiting as these creatures do  
 And his excursions always took him to  
 A neighboring farm where there lived a Cat;  
 Sir Tom Armstrong, by name, with whom he was compact,  
 And this Cat paid visits equally so  
 Nothing transpired of one the other was not soon to know;  
 Each told the other all and held nothing in secrecy,  
 If one had put a squirrel up a tree or met a new tabby...  
 Oh! Mutuality, reciprocity, sincerity, benevolence, the grounds  
 On which all stable and good friendships are found;  
 Like Priscilla and Aquila to the Apostle Paul  
 And that in Ephesus expounded with the Alexandrian, Apollos,  
 Like Moses and Aaron, Naomi and Ruth, yet Aristotle and Plato  
 Oh! How these two could lecture and expound so!  
 Nothing so happened, I say, that the other was not so informed

It so happened that on one of this Dog's visits to his  
 neighboring farm,  
 He told his best friend there of what he had heard,  
 And discharged his ears' fill—each word:  
 Of a party to be put on in that very region—  
 Greater than any Rex, King of Mardi Gras, could put on—  
 A kind of international spring festival  
 That was promised to be delightful and fanciful;  
 Greater than any fiesta ever held down in Mexico with

All of its great merrymaking and bliss.

Greater than ever any Feast of Fools,

Greater than ever any Pythian or Isthmian games

that ever “enthused”....

Filled with as much excitement as a Feast of the Ass

And with just as much eager anticipation that amassed.

Now this grand ball to be put on

Carried but just one stipulation:

Only those animals that had natural horns would

Be allowed to enter and cordially welcome;

Every deer, every wildebeest, every caribou that happened by

And famed Gertrude that would never go dry—

Even Bufford, of the Cat’s farm, that pesky billy goat

That chewed and gorged every forbidden thing down his throat.

Without saying, the very last unicorn would not have

been slighted.

Every bison, gazelle, yak and moose were so invited.

Any animal as long as horns naturally protruded from its head

Could enter and indulge of what this party was to pledge;

With the thought of this great splendor taunting their minds

Alas! This Dog, Sir Duke, and this Cat, Tom Armstrong, stooped

to design

A plan by which they could gain admission

And indulge of this grand ball beyond suspicion:

To acquire a set of horns—one for each

And infiltrate this party through their thoughtless deceit.

Oh covetousness! Oh idolatry! Oh cupidity!

How they can bring all good men to ignobility!

Alas! This Dog and this Cat embarked to enact

Their plan—to go in quest of and bring back

Two sets of horns—

Whether discarded through shedding or in demise through  
nature's legislation.

Toward the standing woods they made their way

In search of the horns that might there “lay”.

Each pledged to the other to ally against any insecurity...

Their claws, valiancy and canine teeth their claim to chivalry.

And as these two took stride,

One could look beneath the Dog and see Tom Armstrong  
trotting alongside....

Out they set on this “Incredible Journey”

With the desire to partake of this grand ball, greatly burning....

These two, like Balto (that great dog) from Nenana to Nome

Over the six-hundred and fifty miles long

Journey through the Alaskan winter to carry diphtheria serum

To people in a situation becoming more threatening per diem.

Like Hannibal of the Punic War with his clever

means devised—

Over the Alps with his war elephants and troops in

a coup of surprise.

Like Pizzaro to Peru with his African men,  
 Oh! Like Eric the Red of Norway to Greenland,  
 Chief Joseph, that wise Nez Perce, and his astute  
 thousand miles retreat,  
 Like Jacques-Yves Cousteau and his men of the  
 Calypso to the chilly, watery deep....  
 Balboa and his several African men to the Pacific Ocean,  
 Coronado to New Mexico with also a portion  
 Of men of this very same ethnicity;  
 Cabeza de Vaca with much determination and difficulty  
 To explore the lands of now Texas and possibly Arizona,  
 The rebellion in the area of Asia Minor by the Ionians.  
 Like Augustine of Canterbury to Britain by Pope Gregory I  
 To lecture to people there of great spiritual thirst.  
 Oh! Saint Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas in meditation go  
 In search of answers of the mysteries that grieve us so.  
     Like Dante down to hell to come back  
 And enlighten us of all the manners of suffering there  
 in that awful place for iniquitous acts—  
 Punishments, that in his witnessing, agreed all to be condign  
 Lo! Sinbad and his seafaring journeying.  
 Yet! Like Aeneas, so Virgil tells, son of Aphrodite and Anchises,  
 The very ancestor of celebrated Romulus,  
 From fallen Troy with his escapees, Nestor  
 Father and moderate count of devoted followers.

Oh! Amelia around the world, never again to be descried  
To take off aware of the danger riding at her side.

Not to lag behind here, but to catch-up to our good  
friends trotting there.

This Dog and Cat were well on their way where  
They thought their desire could best be effected:  
No quagmire, cluster of growth, or acclivity went uninspected.  
But lo! Take well this adumbration—Seneca, in his  
Writings, spoke a good word to the essence of this:  
That catastrophe results when passion destroys reason—  
These stoics with such a philosophic encephalon.

Now this Dog, Sir Duke and this Cat, Tom Armstrong,  
Plying sprightly with prying eyes in their preoccupation  
Had made their way well into the wilderness—  
Far from where the nearest dwelling had its rest,  
Out into a land—I say—that only a frontiersman  
Could adore—say a David Crockett or Isaiah Dorman.

These two, frantically searching and prying in their spree  
Promptly gained the attention of an owl, perched  
high there in a tree.  
And this good owl sitting there  
Began to squint and to stare,  
And as they drew nigh, stretched his neck oblong  
Peering at these two scouring along—  
and raised himself, lifting his wings purging

himself of the paste,  
 This Dog and Cat in sharp disaccord with his taste—  
 Strangers to that particular ‘inhabitant’,  
 And then tilted his head and began to peer askance.  
 And in their passing, swiveled his head  
 Watchfully around, some 180 degrees—well drenched  
 There on his perch by a lofty and rising suspicion—  
 Seeing these two did not mean to have him in deglutition  
 This owl resolved to inquire—clearing his throat—  
 Spoke to our good friends there just as I quote,  
 And well-spoken was he, apposite in all he had to say,  
 Like a salient scholar from Columbia, Fisk or Oxford way,  
 Underlying his exorbitant eloquence was genuine courtesy.

“Um-um-mum,” accosted the owl, “pleasures befall me  
 (this owl of exalted honor as any would concur)  
 By this adventurous encounter of you two kind sirs!”  
 Replied Sir Duke, “Well met to all noble creatures.”  
 With no more spite than a Sunday preacher.  
 “Excuse me if I obtrude,” said the owl, “but would you be  
 So kind as to bestow me the grace  
 Of apprising me what brings you to this remote place—  
 Far from the nearest village or town,  
 And why it is that you search every square foot of ground?”  
 This Cat, Sir Tom Armstrong, was quick to rejoin,  
 “We two are in search of horns—

one set for each.”

And answered this way to the owl’s beseech . . . ,

And offered no more for the sake of maintaining secrecy.

Now this good owl sitting there in his tree,

At this apparent folly, all but tumbled off his limb

In amusement of this obvious principle for *reductio ad absurdum* .

And this owl, deeming it safe, flew down from his roost

Gracefully and gently as one of his very own feathers fallen loose.

This volant bird with lorgnette eyes

Began to converse and dialogize

With our two good friends there on the ground—

Stark redolent of Cicero or Demosthenes in his verbal disposition

And perhaps could have rivaled either of them in dialectics—

Gesticulate, with such a feel for lexicon and periphrasis.

“Do you plan to take up residency here,” the owl inquired,

“or is your stay a sojourn?”

“As you may well suspect”, the Cat was quick to respond.

“We are mere wayfarers to these woodlands!”

Spoke the owl, “You say it is horns you seek here, and I

Beseech your pardon for my importuning!”

“I infer”, said the owl, “you do not mean to have them

Through bartering, but those that are discarded!”

“Yes,” answered the Dog, “just as any contestant

Hopes to be awarded.”

“Whether put down”, continued the Cat, “through shedding

cycle or in demise,

But those that are discarded, just as you surmise!”

Then, inquired Sir Duke, “Have you seen any here or about?”

“No!” answered the owl regrettably—past doubt.

“By nature we creature are idle by day—active by night.”

“It is then we become possessed by such fierce appetite,

For mice, those tasty little mites for which we stalk and fly.”

“You have a great taste for these delicacies”, the Cat

exclaimed, “and so do I!”

And they all but took up an oath to be sworn brothers

Though one feathered the other furred and hardly knew each other—

Joined comradely till the very end by their preference of diet

By such a bond that nothing could disrupt nor disquiet.

This owl introducing himself as one Lord Retina Wild

In an eloquent and etiquette style,

And thence asking whence they were from.

“Why, I was hatched in that very same region!”

And then elevating himself straightway on his talons

“And so does my family live there—each and all!”

“Perhaps you know some of my family there by

appellation or by acquaintance?”

“My mother Edna; my grandmother, Madam Precious; or my

uncle, Avuncular?”

“No.” said the Dog and Cat, dismissing each name as unfamiliar.

“I flew here as almost a fledgling from the nest,